



Canada and B.C. Invest in Infrastructure Upgrades to Support Critical Minerals Development in Northwest B.C. and Create Jobs Across the Province

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Natural Resources Canada

Today, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, with the Honourable Josie Osborne, B.C.'s Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation and the Honourable Rob Fleming, B.C.'s Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, announced a joint investment of \$195 million to upgrade key highway infrastructure in B.C.'s northwest needed to support critical minerals development in the region, improve community access and safety, and create good mining jobs across the province.

Supported by collaboration between governments and funded through the Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund, a flagship program under the Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy, this project has been conditionally approved to support the development and operation of several copper, molybdenum, zinc, nickel and cobalt projects in B.C.'s Golden Triangle region. The federal contribution totals up to \$75 million with the remaining \$120 million being funded by B.C.'s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The Northwest BC Highway Corridor Improvements Project is a key action of B.C.'s Critical Minerals Strategy, a top priority for the Tahltan Central Government and the mining industry in B.C. and a shared priority of the federal government. It will provide a series of improvements for Highways 37, 37A and 51, which include widening shoulders, creating pullouts for slow-moving vehicles, adding chain up/chain off areas and increasing Wi-Fi access along 800 kilometres of roadway. These upgrades are crucial to allow increased industrial traffic linked to mining activity and will generate well-defined, long-term benefits for First Nations and local communities in the region, including enhanced safety, reliability and accessibility of essential services.

Improvements to these highways are integral to advancing critical minerals development in B.C.'s northwest, in consultation with First Nations. The area served by these infrastructure improvements has been called the "Golden Triangle" for its mineral potential, holding approximately 75 percent of Canada's known copper reserves. Expanded and improved highways have the potential to create up to an estimated 3,000 jobs, \$20 billion in capital investments and over \$450 million in annual mineral taxes, as well as substantial local First Nations revenue-sharing and economic opportunities for First Nations.

In addition to the regional benefits, it is estimated that each direct job at a new mine in B.C. creates at least two jobs in mining supply and service companies located throughout the province. A recent report by the Mining Association of B.C. found that Metro Vancouver alone has 1,125 companies supplying goods and services to the mining sector and received economic benefits of \$1.4 billion in 2022. This includes Industrial Equipment Manufacturing Ltd. in Surrey, B.C., which hosted today's announcement and has provided equipment in the northwest region of the province for Newmont Corporation's Brucejack Mine.

Critical minerals are essential components in products used for clean energy like electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, electrical transmission lines and batteries. B.C.'s mining sector provides many of the building blocks of clean technologies that the province and the world need to fight climate change and build a clean economy. Across the country, clean energy solutions are providing enormous economic opportunity for Canada.

Today's joint investments in B.C.'s northwest is one outcome of the increased collaboration toward shared priorities at the B.C. Regional Energy and Resource Table. Minister Wilkinson and Minister Osborne, in collaboration with First Nations partners, also today released the [Regional Energy and Resource Table – One-Year Progress Report](#). The report highlights key progress made since the partners developed the first collaboration framework of its kind in the country last June.

The report highlights tangible progress in all six areas of opportunity, as well as ongoing work on many of the 43 action items, including:

- identifying options to enable First Nations equity participation in the North Coast Transmission Line Project, in partnership with BC Hydro and the Canada Infrastructure Bank.
- working with partners and key stakeholders to advance a call for expressions of interest from proponents, with First Nations partners, for projects in priority sectors (e.g., critical minerals, hydrogen, electrification) to pilot regulatory and permitting efficiencies. This is in line with the Ministerial Working Group on Regulatory Efficiency for Clean Growth Projects' recently released [Building Canada's Clean Future](#) an action plan to modernize federal assessment and permitting processes.
- enhancing information sharing and collaboration on project priorities in key sectors – projects such as the Northwest BC Highway Corridor Improvement Project announced today.
- continuing to invest in Indigenous capacity to meaningfully participate in this process through renewed agreements with the First Nations Energy and Mining Council (FNEMC) and the First Nations Forestry Council (FNFC) for a combined total of \$550,000 this fiscal year.

Quotes

“Developing Canada’s abundant critical minerals creates incredible economic opportunity and good jobs. When we work together on our shared priorities and come together at the regional energy and resource tables, we can drive the progress needed at the pace and scale necessary to seize the benefits the clean economy presents for First Nations, British Columbians and all Canadians. That is what today’s investment in road infrastructure is about.”

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson

Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

“B.C. has the critical minerals the world needs to build a clean economy. We are seizing the generational opportunity before us to create jobs, not only in northwest B.C., but also in communities across the province that supply and provide services to our mining sector. Working with Tahltan and Canada, these significant investments into Highways 37 and 51 will provide safer roads for workers and residents alike, in Tahltan, Nsiga’a and Gitanyow territories, and better services for people and communities in the region.”

The Honourable Josie Osborne,

B.C. Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

“The Northwest BC Highway Corridor Improvements Project will benefit a critical mineral region and First Nations partners. It will also improve transportation safety, reliability and access to essential services, and reinforce our government’s commitment to a net-zero future.”

The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez,

Minister of Transportation

“One of the six priority areas in the Regional Energy and Resource Table is critical minerals. We now have three critical minerals strategies: by Canada, B.C., and First Nations and this year we seek to align the three strategies to ensure the rights and title interests of First Nations in B.C. are respected based upon the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Robert Phillips, Political Executive

First Nations Summit

“UBCIC continues to reaffirm its unwavering support for the work of First Nations across B.C. who have been working through the First Nations Energy and Mining Council (FNEMC) and the First Nations Forestry Council (FNFC) along with the Government of Canada and Province of B.C. in our continued efforts working toward net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The B.C Regional Energy and Resource Table report highlights our progress. The critical minerals industry is vital as we battle the ever-accelerating climate crisis and transition away from fossil fuels. As always, First Nations need to be full partners in this work.”

Chief Don Tom, Vice-President

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)

“Mining is a part of our culture and economy. For thousands of years, Tahltans prospected, mined and traded obsidian. While we recognize the need for critical minerals for a low-carbon future, this can only happen with the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples; therefore, the pace and scale of mining in our Territory will be determined by the Tahltan Nation. Today’s announcement regarding safer highways for our people is welcomed by the Tahltan Nation.”

Beverley Slater, President

Tahltan National Government

“The Tahltan-Mining Industry Working Group, made up of leaders from the Tahltan Nation and select mining companies operating in Tahltan Territory (Galore Creek, Newmont, Seabridge, Skeena Resources), have been advocating for upgrades to arterial routes in Tahltan Territory to ensure the safe travel of community and commercial road users. Today’s landmark announcement is a testament to the leadership of the Tahltan Nation and demonstrates the incredible outcomes that occur when Indigenous People and industry work together toward a shared vision for the future.”

Tahltan-Mining Industry Working Group

"We know the northern region through its highways, ports and rail networks plays a vital role in B.C.'s and Canada's economy – including the movement of critical minerals and resources. It's crucial we improve access and upgrade our highway infrastructure in this area so people can continue to count on this industry and the jobs it creates."

The Honourable Rob Fleming

B.C. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

"Highway infrastructure improvements in Tahltan Territory and the Golden Triangle will advance the development of B.C.'s critical minerals potential by facilitating investment in this vitally important B.C. mining region. Planned improvements will enable safe goods and services movement and industry growth which, in turn, will create jobs and contract opportunities through B.C. including urban centres like Surrey and Vancouver where \$1.4 billion in goods and services were purchased by the mining industry from 1,125 companies in 2022. Critical minerals offer a generational opportunity to build prosperity for all British Columbians."

Michael Goehring

President & CEO, Mining Association of B.C.

"This new funding is welcome news as it will go a long way in improving key highways in northwestern British Columbia. It is a big win for ensuring the safety of road users from local communities and for the nearly three thousand workers at Newmont's Brucejack and Red Chris mines."

Bernard Wessels

Managing Director, North America, Newmont

"In 2022 alone, close to 4,000 businesses located in 200 municipalities, towns and First Nations communities benefited from \$3.7 billion in spending from B.C.'s operating mines and smelters. This strategic investment will support the development of new critical mineral mines in northwest B.C. The benefits of developing those mines will absolutely be shared province-wide, as mining supplies and services companies from communities across B.C. support their construction and long-term operation."

Alec Morrison

President & CEO, Mining Suppliers Association of BC

"This funding is an investment in B.C. in the truest form. It helps provide stability and confidence for those who invest in mining in the province – through which there are long-term benefits for First Nations and local communities in the region. The investment offers safer and more reliable access, which will help support projects moving forward and assist us and the many others who depend on the industry for our livelihoods."

Chuck Walls,

President, Industrial Equipment Manufacturers Ltd.

"These are much needed improvements to ensure safety and connectivity along our highways 37 and 37-A. Transportation safeguards in highly sensitive ecological and cultural corridors are essential to balance industrial development and Indigenous land stewardship."

Tara Marsden, Wilp Sustainability Director,

Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs

"Investment into the Northwest Region has a direct correlation to the good work being carried out by Nations to ensure that regional economic stability is great for all Canadians. We see the importance of the critical minerals investments like this supporting safer access to industry and long-term economic growth of our people. Moreover, it provides for safe journeys for the Nisga'a Nation, our neighboring nations and guests to our respective territories."

Eva Clayton

President, Nisga'a Nation.

"Galore Creek is excited to see this important investment into northwest B.C. The funding will be used to make improvements to highways that provide a critical link for both the resource sector and for Indigenous and other local communities. This investment shows Canada's and B.C.'s commitment to reconciliation and critical mineral development by ensuring the safe flow of goods and people in the region."

Rob Mean, General Manager

Galore Creek Mining Corporation

"These upgrades impact roads that traverse the northern half of our province and are the only route for many communities. Better roads will encourage economic investment of all kinds in the region, including supplying critical minerals to global markets. Most importantly, better roads mean safer travel for northern residents who regularly travel long distances for basic services and supplies."

Justin Himmelright, Senior Vice President, External Affairs

Skeena Resources

"We welcome today's federal and provincial infrastructure investment in northwest British Columbia as a pivotal moment for our critical minerals industry. This funding underscores the importance of mineral exploration in the region, supporting economic growth, environmental stewardship and collaboration with Indigenous communities. Investments like this assist in unlocking the mineral potential of this resource-rich province."

Keerit Jutla, President and CEO,

Association of Mineral Exploration

"We're extremely pleased to see this joint investment in the northwest. Industry projects are a great benefit to our area and the province, but it's critical that the infrastructure supporting them is safe for our communities. We look forward to greater safety and more job opportunities in this important corridor for the benefit of all B.C."

Cyra Yunkw, Chair of the Board of Directors

Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine

"Arrow Transportation has been hauling on Highway 37 since the 1970s, and the B.C. Government's investment in improvements to this vital route is crucial for the safety of our operations and the well-being of our professional truck drivers. This investment not only enhances the security of our hauling activities but also plays a significant role in continuing the economic development of northwest B.C. Moreover, these improvements benefit our valued joint venture partners, the Tahltan Nation and the Nisga'a Nation, by enhancing safety and economic resilience in the region. We are extremely proud to work alongside these Nations and support initiatives that contribute to their prosperity and the overall growth of this region."

Tim Bell

Executive Vice President of the Arrow Group

Quick facts

- Canada has developed its own critical minerals strategy with the aim of advancing the development of these resources and related value chains to drive the transition to a low-carbon economy and support advanced technology and manufacturing.
- The Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy addresses five core objectives:
 - o supporting economic growth, competitiveness and job creation;
 - o promoting climate action and strong environmental management;
 - o enhancing global security and partnerships with allies;
 - o advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples; and
 - o fostering diverse and inclusive workforces and communities.
- Canada's whole-of-government approach to critical mineral development is collaborative, forward-looking, iterative, adaptive and long-term. The initiatives presented in the Strategy will be implemented and refined in collaboration with provincial, territorial, Indigenous, industry and other Canadian and international partners.
- The Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund is a key program under the Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy to support enabling clean energy and transportation infrastructure projects necessary to increase Canada's supply of responsibly sourced critical minerals.
- The Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund supports strategic priorities such as decarbonizing industrial mining operations, strengthening supply chains through transportation infrastructure and advancing economic reconciliation by supporting the participation of Indigenous Peoples in infrastructure and critical minerals projects.
- The Indigenous Natural Resource Partnerships Program aims to increase the economic participation of Indigenous communities and organizations in the development of natural resource projects that support the transition to a clean energy future.
- The B.C. Critical Minerals Strategy lays the foundations for strong partnerships between First Nations, government and industry that will encourage investment and sustainable economic growth that advances climate action.

- B.C.'s mining sector currently employs more than 35,000 workers in rural and urban communities. The sector also contributes \$7.3 billion to provincial gross domestic product (GDP), produces 28 percent of export value and approximately \$1 billion in provincial government revenue to support services.
- B.C. is rich with raw minerals, having 16 of the 31 identified critical minerals in the Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy. B.C. is Canada's largest producer of copper and only producer of molybdenum.
- Work on infrastructure improvements will begin in 2024 and are targeted to be completed by the end of 2030.
- The First Nations Energy and Mining Council's (FNEMC) B.C. First Nations Critical Mineral Strategy, released in March 2024, encourages the development of inclusive critical minerals strategies to inform and amplify First Nations voices across British Columbia. The strategy discusses the importance of sharing the benefits generated from critical minerals with First Nations and upholding the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- The Regional Energy and Resource Tables were launched in June 2022, with B.C., Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In October 2022, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, the Northwest Territories and Yukon also joined the initiative. Nunavut joined in May 2024. A total of 10 provinces and territories are now participating in the Regional Tables.

Associated links

- [The Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy](#).
- [Government of Canada Launches \\$1.5-Billion Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund](#)
- [Programs and funding for critical minerals projects](#)
- [Regional Energy and Resource Tables](#)
- [Regional Tables Launched to Collaboratively Drive Economic Opportunities in a Prosperous Net-Zero Future](#)
- [British Columbia Regional Energy and Resource Table Collaboration Framework on the Path to Net Zero](#)
- [British Columbia Regional Energy and Resource Table – One-Year Progress Report](#)
- [British Columbia Regional Energy and Resource Table – One-Year Progress Report Summary](#).

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